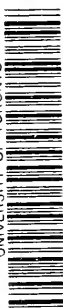


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THE PRONUNCIATION OF

EWÉ

by J. Berry, B.A.

Lecturer in West African Languages, University of London

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The Pronunciation of EWE

BY

J. BERRY, B.A.

(Lecturer in West African Languages, University of London)

Illustrated by two gramophone records made by Lily G. Baeta

Ewe, the language of a million people, is spoken in the extreme south-eastern corner of the Gold Coast and in the British and French Mandated Territories of Togoland. It has a considerable School and Church Literature, and its importance for the Gold Coast administrator, missionary or trader, is second only to Twi.

This pamphlet, like others in the series, is designed for the European learner who wishes to acquire from the beginning an adequate pronunciation. Ewe is not an easy language; tone and "strange" consonants demand of the beginner considerable concentration and effort.¹

In the following pages he will find the main features of Ewe speech described and its difficulties set out for him. Two gramophone records accompany the text, and these should be used for practice in hearing and reproducing the sounds.

The material of the records is:

Record I (Part 1) Vowels, semi-vowels and diphthongs.

„ I („ 2) Consonants and tones.

„ II („ 1) Sentences and greetings.

„ II („ 2) A story.

Groups of examples spoken on the records are marked by a star (★) in the margin of the text. The complete text of record I will be found in the Appendix.

The words are recorded leaving time for the repetition of each word. It is useful to listen for some time before beginning to imitate. After this, the student should repeat many times until the exact pronunciation of the sounds can be reproduced without difficulty. It is useful to reverse the order, i.e. student to read each word from the text before playing the record. Finally,

¹ He will find that a knowledge of the general principles of phonetics is helpful here. This pamphlet might well be read in conjunction with Westermann and Ward's *Practical Phonetics for Students of African Languages*, Oxford University Press, 1933, 2nd and revised edition, 1949.

let him practise saying the words without the record. This is a help towards developing a memory for the sounds and tones of the language as well as a means of building up a vocabulary.

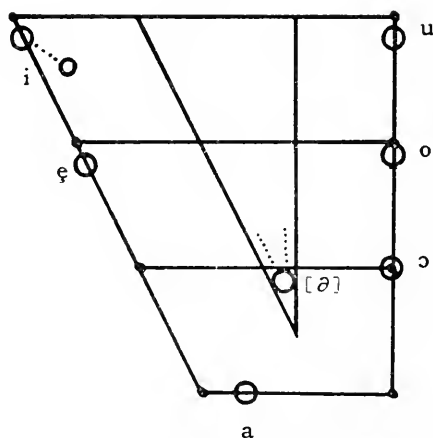
Note.—Ewe has several dialects; some with considerable differences in pronunciation. Miss Lily G. Baeta, who collaborated in the preparation of this pamphlet, is a native of Keta and speaks the Aɲɔ dialect of Ewe as her mother tongue. This is the dialect now most favoured for literary purposes. It has the added merit of being intelligible throughout Ewe-speaking areas.

The examples recorded are taken from Miss Baeta's speech and are spoken by her; they are all commonly to be found in modern colloquial Aɲɔ.

Ewe Vowels.

Note.—The lip positions are in each case normal for the type of vowel, viz.:

- i spread
- e spread and slightly more open than i
- ɔ̃ and a neutrally open
- ɔ open rounded
- o more closely rounded than ɔ
- u very closely rounded



- Cardinal vowels
- Ewe vowels

Ewe has a simple vowel system. There are seven significant vowels. They are:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i	e	a	ɔ	ɔ	o	u

Their lip and tongue positions are set out on p. 2.

The sounds themselves are relatively easy to acquire. There is, however, one difficulty of an orthographic nature.

The present spelling is inconsistent in its representation of the two Aɲɔ sounds here written e and ɔ. The student is advised first to learn to pronounce and to distinguish these two vowels in the examples given on the two accompanying gramophone records, and then to read the brief observations set out below as a guide to usage.

NOTE ON e AND ɔ.

Vowel No. 2 e occurs:

- (1) In certain adverbs and adjectives, particularly diminutives; it may then be represented in the standard orthography, either by the letter *ɛ* or the letter *e* or even *ee*, e.g.:

lɔboe [--]	<i>narrow and oblong</i>
gbadze [--]	<i>small and flat</i>
sesiẽ [---]	<i>strongly</i>
fafɛ [^^]	<i>cold</i>
or	
fafee	

- (2) In certain contracted forms with verbs (see page 7, vowel combinations, and page 9, elision of vowels); it is then written *e*.¹

e.g.	meyie [__]	<i>but I went</i>
	tsie [__]	<i>it is water</i>
	or tsi ye [--]	
	kɔe	<i>lift it, pronounced kɔẽ [↘]</i>
	tɔe	<i>draw it, pronounced tee [↘]</i>

¹ Except in the words nɛ [↘], *to him* (from na, give)
(tsɔ) . . . vɛ [↘], *bring it*.

- (3) In a few nouns, it is then written either ϵ or e indiscriminately, more commonly the latter.

$h\epsilon$ [/]	<i>knife</i>	$p\epsilon$ [/]	<i>chisel</i>
but $af\epsilon bide$ [_ _ -]	<i>toe</i>	$kpakpaxe$ [^ ^ -]	<i>duck</i>

- (4) This sound does not occur in stems.

Vowel No. 4 (∂) is always written e and presents no difficulty. In the early stages when learning vocabulary and reading texts it might be well if the student were to make (e) with a diacritic (e.g. ϵ) when the sound of vowel No. 2 is represented. This is done in the following pages, viz. from now on, vowel No. 2 is represented here either by ϵ , if it is so spelt in the current literature, or by ϵ (i.e. with the diacritic) if the orthography has e .

e.g. $h\epsilon$ [/] *knife* but $af\epsilon bide$ [_ _ -] *toe*

The Vowels described.

i is a close vowel near to Cardinal No. 1. A more open variety of i is frequently heard in closed syllables (cf. *kiniti*, *below*).

★	vi [/]	<i>child</i>
	afi [_ _]	<i>mouse</i>
	$kiniti$ [_ ^ -]	<i>nim tree</i>

ϵ/ϵ is somewhat lower than Cardinal No. 2. It is near the first element of a typical English diphthong, e.g. (as in *day*).

$p\epsilon$ [/]	<i>chisel</i>	$tog\epsilon$ [^ -]	<i>ear ring</i>
		$kpakpaxe$ [^ ^ -]	<i>duck</i>

e (phonetically ∂) is a central vowel very near the so-called "neutral" vowel used in English in unstressed position (*sofa*, *around*).

ne [^]	<i>coconut</i>
ame [_ _]	<i>person</i>
$fefe$ [_ ^]	<i>play</i>

This vowel occurs:

- (1) As a prefix:

eve [_ _]	<i>two</i>
$ets\partial$ [_ _]	<i>to-morrow or yesterday</i>
$egbe$ [^ _]	<i>to-day</i>

- (2) As the second and third persons singular pronominal prefixes:

eyi [ˈ_]	<i>he went</i>
èva [ˈ-]	<i>you have come</i>
elolo [ˈ__]	<i>it's big</i>

a is a front vowel near to Cardinal No. 4, rather like the first element of the typical English diphthong *aj* in, for example, *pie*. Beginners tend to confuse this sound and the central vowel (e). Certainly, in quick speech, the two can sound very much alike.

ga [ˈ_]	<i>money or metal</i>
aka [ˈ_ˈ]	<i>coal</i>
papa [ˈ_ /]	<i>fan</i>

a occurs as a prefix:

★ ame [ˈ__]	<i>person</i>
ati [ˈ_ˈ]	<i>tree</i>
alē [ˈ-]	<i>sheep</i>

a and e contrasted:

★ ka [ˈ_]	<i>thread, string</i>	ke [ˈˈ]	<i>sand</i>
nya [ˈ_]	<i>word</i>	nye [ˈ_]	<i>gum</i>
gaḍaka [ˈ_ˈ-]	<i>iron box</i>	ga ḍeke o [ˈ_ˈˈ_]	<i>no money</i>

o is near to Cardinal No. 5. It resembles in quality the English sound in *ball* (bɔ:l) rather than that in *not*.

★ mo [ˈˈ]	<i>road</i>
avo [ˈ_ /]	<i>cloth</i>
abobo [ˈ__ˈ]	<i>snail</i>

o is a half close rounded vowel, about Cardinal No. 7. It resembles the French *o* in *beau*. English speakers tend to diphthongise this vowel when it is long (i.e. they say *ow* as in *boat*) and when it is short, to substitute for it a short *u* (English *put*). These faults may be avoided:

- (1) By taking care not to move tongue or lips during the articulation of the vowel;
- (2) By trying to make a lower and retracted type of *u* with lips well rounded.

mo [ˈ_]	<i>face</i>
ako [ˈˈ-]	<i>parrot</i>
fofo [ˈ-]	<i>father</i>

ɔ and o contrasted:

to [ʔ]	<i>mountain</i>	tɔ [ʔ]	<i>father</i>
So [ʔ]	<i>God of thunder</i>	sɔ [ʔ]	<i>horse</i>
ago [ʔ]	<i>velvet</i>	ago [ʔ]	<i>type of fruit</i>

u is a close rounded vowel, Cardinal No. 8.

nu [ʔ]	<i>thing</i>	mu [ʔ]	<i>mosquito</i>	avu [ʔ/]	<i>dog</i>
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Nasalization of Vowels.

With the exception of vowel No. 2,¹ all vowels may be nasalized. In the orthography they are marked with the tilde.

fī [ʔ]	<i>to blow the nose</i>	võ [ʔ/]	<i>evil</i>
alẽ [ʔ-]	<i>sheep</i>	gõ [ʔ]	<i>to walk briskly</i>
afã [ʔ]	<i>half</i>	lũ [ʔ]	<i>to shave</i>

Nasality may be significant as the following pairs of words show:

★ akpa [ʔ]	<i>a part, or side</i>	akpã [ʔ]	<i>a type of food, pudding</i>
lo [ʔ]	<i>crocodile</i>	lõ [ʔ]	<i>to last</i>
efii [ʔ]	<i>he stole it</i>	efiĩ [ʔ]	<i>he blew his nose</i>
ato [ʔ]	<i>guinea-worm</i>	atõ [ʔ]	<i>five</i>

It must be remembered there are degrees of nasality. In the neighbourhood of nasal consonants vowels are all partially nasalized: for example, the vowels in **nye** [ʔ], *gum*, and **mu** [ʔ], *mosquito*, are slightly nasal (cf. the nasal twang of the English vowel **a** in *man*), but in **nyẽ**, *to sneeze*, **mũ**, *to upset*, the nasalization is much stronger; in the first case the nasalization is, as it were, dependent (and therefore need not be noted), in the second it is independent and is an essential feature of the word.

Vowel Length.

All vowels are found short and long. Long vowels occur only in adverbs and adjectives.²

¹ This may be nasalized when long. lẽẽ [ʔ-], *bridge*. In some cases the dictionary wrongly has ẽ for the nasal counterpart of vowel No. 5, writing for example alẽ (sheep) for alẽ (above).

² Long vowels do not occur in verb or noun stems. They do, of course, in certain inflected forms, e.g. the noun with its article, **dadaa** [ʔ], *the mother*, and the habitual tense of the verb, **metaa nu** [ʔ\], *I draw*.

★ mii [ˌ]	<i>continuously</i>	fii [ˌ]	<i>word of protestation or assertion</i>
kɔtɛɛ [ˌˌ]	<i>clearly</i>	sɛɛ [ˌ]	<i>for a while</i>
baa [ˌ]	<i>naturally</i>	fãã [ˌ]	<i>freely</i>
lɔbɔɔ [ˌˌ]	<i>big and long</i>	vɔɔ [ˌ]	<i>well</i>
lubuu [ˌˌ]	<i>stupid</i>	fũũ [ˌ]	<i>much</i>

What are phonetically long vowels also occur in contractions of the verb and its object (third person singular pronoun).

kee, open it, is pronounced *kii* [ˌ]

flie, cut it up, is pronounced *flii* [ˌ]

Although it is only necessary to distinguish the two vowel lengths, long and short, the student will easily recognise a third, viz. half-long. This would appear to depend on tone and is heard:

(1) In monosyllabic nouns of mid tone:

ta · [ˌ] *head*

nu · [ˌ] *mouth*

(2) In syllables with tonal movement (i.e. with rising or falling tones):

avu [ˌˌ/] *dog*

gbɔ [ˌ/] *goat*

aɔaka [ˌˌˌ]

These vowels are written short.

Diphthongs and Combinations of Vowels.

Nearly all possible combinations of vowels occur as diphthongs. A few are given below:

★ tia [ˌˌ]	<i>to choose</i>	aɔkɔe [ˌˌˌ]	<i>oyster</i>
fie [ˌ]	<i>tiger nut</i>	bua [ˌ]	<i>to pretend</i>
abui [ˌˌˌ]	<i>needle</i>	ao [ˌ]	<i>no</i>
akɔlɔɛ [ˌˌˌˌ]	<i>a nap</i>	fĩɛ [ˌ]	<i>evening</i>
	<i>gɔɛ [ˌˌ] protruding</i>		

Diphthongs also occur:

(1) When the verb is followed by the third person object pronoun.

miae, squeeze it, is pronounced *miɛ* [ˌˌˌ]

enoe, he drank it, is pronounced *enũi* [ˌˌˌ]

edue, he ate it, is pronounced *edũi* [ˌˌˌ]

- (2) When adjectives are formed from the verb.¹

ɖiɖiɛ [ˈːːː] *Slippery* is formed from the verb ɖiɖi
 kɔkɔɛ, *holy*, is formed from kɔ and is pronounced
 kɔkɔɛ [ˈːːː]
 vɛvɛ, *dishevelled*, is formed from vɛ and is pronounced
 vɛvɛ [ˈːːː]
 miamiɛ, *tight*, is formed from mia and is pronounced
 miamiɛ [ˈːːː]

- (3) When "diminutives" are formed from other adjectives.

goe, *a round calabash*, is formed from go and is pro-
 nounced gũi [ˈːːː]
 lɔbɔe, *long and cylindrical*, is formed from lɔbɔ and is
 pronounced lɔbɔɛ [ˈːːː]

- (4) Combinations of vowel with a occur in the habitual
 form of the verb, e.g.:

metsia dzi [ˈːːːː]	<i>I get impatient</i>
eɖea ame ² [ˈːːːː]	<i>he saves people</i>
etɔa nu [ˈːːːː]	<i>he sews</i>
ekoa nu [ˈːːːː]	<i>he laughs a lot</i>
ebua ame [ˈːːːː]	<i>he is respectful</i>

Similarly the noun with its article:

atia [ˈːːː]	<i>the tree</i>
amea [ˈːːː]	<i>the man</i>
atɔtɔa [ˈːːːː]	<i>the pineapple</i>
akoa [ˈːːː]	<i>the parrot</i>
dua [ˈːːː]	<i>the town</i>
hɛa [ˈːːː]	<i>the knife</i>

¹ In two cases this results in the formation of a triphthong, i.e. with

(a) verbs ending in u: *kukuie*, *lifeless*, is formed from ku and is pro-
 nounced kukũiɛ [ˈːːːː];

(b) verbs ending in o: *fofuiɛ*, *scoured*, is formed from fo and is pro-
 nounced fofuiɛ [ˈːːːː].

² Tends to become eɖaame in quick speech.

Vowel Elision and Contraction.

In connected speech elision or contraction of vowels frequently takes place. A few examples are given below. The student is advised to consult Westermann¹ for a fuller statement.

e is always elided after e, ɔ and o.

- ★ ede (e)tsɔ [ˈ__] *he arrived yesterday*
 etsɔ (e)ve [ˈ-__] *he took two*
 edo (e)ve [ˈ-__] *he put on two*

a is always elided after a and ɔ.

- ★ eqa (a)zi [ˈ-__] *it laid an egg*
 eko (a)zɔ [ˈ--] *it is high now*

When a and e come together in the sentence, one of three things may occur.

- ★ (i) e may be elided. el(e) afi [ˈ_ \], *he is here* (verb + noun).

(ii) a may be elided. ale (a)me [ˈ--], *that kind of person* (noun + noun).

(iii) The two vowels may be contracted into (e:).

- ★ bae, *cheat him*, becomes bɛɛ [ˈ_]
 nae², *give it him*, becomes nɛɛ [ˈ \]
 fafaɛ, *cold* (from fa), becomes fafɛɛ [ˈ--]

Semi Vowels.

y requires little comment. With some speakers it is weak and tends to be dropped intervocally.

- ★ yi [ˈ_] *cutlass* yevu [ˈ--] *European*
 aboyome [ˈ__-] *prisoner of war*

w occurs before back vowels only. It is well rounded and often fairly long. It tends to be weak and like y, in certain cases, practically disappears, e.g. awu sounds like au [ˈ_].

- ★ wɔ [ˈ_] *flour or powder* ewo [ˈ_-] *ten*
 awu [ˈ__] *dress*

¹ "A Study of the Ewe Language". O.U.P., 1930.

² Is written in this case nɛ.

The Consonants.

Ewe has a difficult consonant system. The slight differences in pronunciation between an Ewe consonant and a rather similar sound in English may have great importance. This is so in the case of *f*, *v*, *d* and *h*. The student should read carefully the notes set out below where these sounds are described in detail and in the early stages be constantly on guard against carrying over into Ewe the speech habits of his mother tongue.

(1) The voiceless plosives *p*, *t*, *k* are aspirated. The aspiration is more noticeable before back vowels; before front, it is very slight, particularly with *t* and *k*.

(2) *p* occurs chiefly in loan words and is statistically rare.

★	<i>pepi</i> [ʔ-]	<i>harmattan</i>
	<i>apaka</i> [ʔ-ʔ]	<i>hammock</i>

t, like *d* below is dental (i.e. made with the tip of the tongue on the teeth).

★	<i>ati</i> [ʔ-]	<i>tree</i>	<i>atoto</i> [ʔ-ʔ]	<i>pineapple</i>
	<i>te</i> [ʔ]	<i>yam</i>	<i>to</i> [ʔ]	<i>ear</i>
	<i>tata</i> [ʔ-]	<i>photograph</i>	<i>tu</i> [ʔ]	<i>gun</i>

k is as in English.

b and *g* call for no comment.

d is best treated in relation to *ɖ*.

The actual articulation of these consonants is not very difficult to acquire once the salient features are recognised. They are summarised below.

d is a voiced dental plosive, i.e. articulated with the tip of the tongue against the back of the teeth. It is very like the English *d* in *width*.

ɖ is a voiced alveolar plosive articulated with the tip of the tongue against the alveolar arch. The point of contact is somewhat retracted as compared with the normal (i.e. English) *d*. It is for this reason, probably, that it has been called the "retroflex *ɖ*". It may be helpful to set out certain other incidental differences in the articulation of these two sounds.

- (1) The *articulator*, i.e. the tongue, is relatively flat and spread in making *d*. (Notice how the sides touch the inner sides of the upper teeth during the occlusion.) In pronouncing *ɖ*, the tongue is somewhat contracted, i.e. there is a slight grooving of the blade such as occurs in the formation of the "hushing" fricatives.¹
- (2) The *release* of the *d* stop is sharp, that of *ɖ* slow, i.e. in making *d* the tongue is withdrawn sharply and cleanly from the point of articulation and the following (vowel) sound may begin simultaneously with the release of the occlusion (cf. the articulation of plosives in French); in making *ɖ* the tongue is withdrawn somewhat slowly from the point of articulation, and a momentary constriction is formed between the occlusion and the complete release. This results in slight affrication heard in different degrees before different vowels. It is clearest before open vowels and, for example, *ɖa* often sounds rather like *ɖʰa*. Finally, the degrees of *tension* vary considerably between the two sounds. *d* is pronounced with strong force and noticeably greater tension of the muscles in the articulating organs.

Examples.

adika [__ˊ]	enmity	aɖiba [__ˊ]	paʋpaʋ
adelã [__ˋ]	hunter	ɖeka [__ˊ]	one
dada [__ˊ]	mother	aɖaka [__ˋ]	box
dɔku [__]	turkey	aɖɔ [__]	crown of the head
duko [__ˊ]	nation	akoɖu [__ˋ]	banana
		ɖoovu [__ˋ]	

Some practice also will be required to *hear* the difference between *d* and *ɖ*. Compare:

edii [__ˋ]	he looked for it	edii [__ˊ]	he buried it
ade [__ˋ]	saliva	aɖe [__ˋ]	tongue
da [__]	bow	ɖa [__]	hair
dɔ [__]	illness	ɖɔ [__ˋ]	net
do [__ˋ]	hole	ɖo [__]	cloth
du [__]	town	ɖu [__]	gun-powder

¹ The groove, of course, is much less in the case of *ɖ*.

Note.—Only the voiced dental plosive occurs in combination with *r*, e.g.:

drɔ̃ [ʌ] *cupboard* dra [ɹ] *a rascal*

kp, **gb** are the usual labiovelar consonants. In articulating these sounds two stops are made simultaneously. The back of the tongue touches the soft palate as for **k** or **g** and the lips are touching for the **p** or **b** stop. They are most difficult to hear in initial position. The student might best begin his practice in words such as:

akpe and akpakpa

Where the on-glide from the vowel makes it easier to hear the **k**. In repeating, care must be taken that the two articulations are simultaneous. The on-glide to the **k** must not be heard before the lips come together for the **p** position, i.e. it must be **a-kpe** not **ak-pe**. In the same way, the two stops must be released simultaneously.

akpe [ʌ̃]	<i>thank you</i>	gbe [ʌ]	<i>voice</i>
akpakpa [ʌ̃-]	<i>dove</i>	agba [ʌ̃]	<i>load</i>
kpo [ʌ̃]	<i>fence</i>	gbɔ̃ [ɹ]	<i>goat</i>
kpo [ʌ̃]	<i>oven</i>	agbo [ʌ̃]	<i>gate</i>

ts, **dz** are affricates. Most commonly they are dental, i.e. as in English *hats* and the Italian *mezzo*. These sounds do not occur initially in English and so may present some difficulty to the student. They are easily to be acquired by repeating an English sentence, such as *the hats are (on the table)*, trying to divide the words *the ha-tsare*, then saying *tsare* without *the ha*. The resulting sound will approximate to the Ewe **tsa**, *to wander*.

★	tsa [ʌ]	<i>to wander</i>	dze [ʌ]	<i>salt</i>
	tso [ʌ]	<i>to cut</i>	dza [ʌ]	<i>to fall (of rain)</i>
	tsu [ʌ]	<i>madness</i>	dzo [ʌ]	<i>fire</i>
	tse [ʌ̃]	<i>to bear fruit</i>	dzu [ʌ]	<i>to insult</i>

In an alternative pronunciation, some modern Aɲlɔ speakers use the palato-alveolar affricates **tʃ**, **dʒ** described below.¹

¹ Thus **midʒo** [ʌ̃̃] or **midzo**, *let's go*.

eva tʃɔ [ʌ̃̃-] or **eva etsɔ**, *he came yesterday*.

tʃ, dʒ. These are near the sounds in English *church* and *judge*, but pronounced with the lips well spread. They occur in Ewe:

(1) Most commonly before the close vowel *i*, and are then written *ts*, *dz*.¹

★	tsi [_]	<i>water</i>	dzi [_]	<i>heart</i>
	tsikpe [- -]	<i>hailstone</i>	dziehe [- -]	<i>North</i>

(2) Less frequently before other vowels: the orthography usually has *tsy*.²

	tsyɔ [_]	<i>to strain</i>
★	tsyɔ [-]	<i>canine tooth</i>
	tsyɔ̃ [\]	<i>funeral</i>

m, *n* need no description.

ny is a palatal nasal, and is one sound, cf. French *gn* in *Boulogne*. The English sound in *news* (*n* + *y*) is not acceptable to Ewe ears.

★	nyi [_]	<i>cow</i>	nye [_]	<i>gum</i>	nya [_]	<i>word</i>
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ŋ is a velar nasal, the sound in English *sing*. Unlike English, Ewe frequently begins words with this sound. If the student finds difficulty in pronouncing ŋ initially in the word it might be helpful, as was suggested in the case of *ts*, *dz*, to practise saying sentences such as *bring all*, trying to divide the words *bri-ngall*, then saying *ngall* without the *bri*.

	ŋe [-]	<i>to break</i>	★	angba [- - -]	<i>leaf</i>
★	ŋɔti [- -]	<i>nose</i>			
	ŋuti [- -]	<i>skin</i>			
	fofoŋ [_ -]	<i>sugar cane</i>			

¹ Cf. Westermann, op. cit.,

s, *z*, *ts* and *dz* are said to be palatalized before *i*, but *tʃ* occurs before other vowels in a number of words.

'atfatʃa [_ _ _], *plaited mat*; atʃɔ̃ [_ -], *finery*.

Similarly, *s*, *z* occur before *i* in, for example, *zi* [/], *pipe*.

² In some types of Ewe speech a pronounced *y*-glide is heard with this sound, atʃɔ̃ for example, sounds very like atʃiɔ̃.

Some adverbs and adjectives end in a lengthened velar nasal; these are, however, written with one *ŋ* only.

sɔŋ(ŋ) [ː] *of the same kind*

taŋ(ŋ) [ː] *full*

ŋ occurs as a nasal prefix. It may then be syllabic and have its own tone.

★ ŋdi [-] *morning* ŋgo [-] *forehead*

1 is the normal clear 1 used in English before vowels, and needs little comment.

lɪli [ː] *to surprise*

lo [ː] *crocodile*

lala [ː] *to wait*

lu [-] *guinea corn*

lɔ [ː] *to collect*

Note, however, 1 before nasal vowels is strongly nasalized.

alē [-] *sheep*

lā [ː] *meat*

lɔ̃ [ː] *to love or to agree*

1 not only initiates stems, but occurs as the second element in certain consonant combinations. It does not follow alveolar or palatal consonants.

aflagba [ː] *woven mat*

hlɔ̃ [ː] *clan*

ɣleti [-] *moon*

r is usually a voiced alveolar fricative. It does not begin stems and occurs only when an alveolar or palatal consonant precedes (cf. 1).

tre [r] *calabash*

tsranuī [r] *sieve*

dzre [r] *quarrel*

yayra [r] *blessing*

f, v need no comment. It is important to distinguish them from their bilabial counterparts.

f, v are bilabial fricatives: in pronouncing, the upper lip is brought down to meet the lower lip and the breath is expelled through the narrow opening thus formed, to make a fricative sound. The teeth do not enter into the articulation. The lips are not rounded (they are as in the position for the "neutral" vowel) and the whole articulation is lax.

f, *v* contrasted with *f*, *v*.

<i>f</i> ā [_]	<i>yeast</i>	<i>f</i> ā [_]	<i>puff adder</i>
<i>fu</i> [^]	<i>bone</i>	<i>fu</i> [^]	<i>feather</i>
<i>v</i> o [_]	<i>python</i>	<i>v</i> o [_]	<i>to finish</i>
<i>vu</i> [_]	<i>blood</i>	<i>vu</i> [_]	<i>to tear apart</i>

s and *z* are as in English. They are said to be palatalized before *i*,¹ when they are the palato-alveolar fricatives *ʃ* and *ʒ*, the sounds in English *ship* and *measure* (but pronounced with the lips well spread).

★	<i>asi</i> [_ ^]	<i>hand</i>	<i>sisiblisi</i> [^ ^ _]	<i>bear</i>
	<i>azi</i> [_ /]	<i>egg</i>	<i>zitola</i> [_ ^ -]	<i>agitator</i>

ɣ is a voiced velar¹ fricative, i.e. the back of the tongue is raised until it is near the velum or soft palate, and the air escapes through the narrowed passage making a fricative sound. In the case of the Ewe *ɣ*, the friction is slight and the whole articulation weak.

★	<i>ɣi</i> [^]	<i>harmattan</i>	<i>ɣe</i> [_]	<i>sun</i>	<i>ɣaɣla</i> [_ -]	<i>secrecy</i>
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x is the voiceless counterpart of *ɣ*.² *h* is a pharyngeal fricative with voice, i.e. voiced *h*. Some English speakers (particularly men) pronounce intervocalic *h* in this manner. It is heard, for example, in words like *perhaps*.

★	<i>xexi</i> [- ^]	<i>umbrella</i>	<i>ha</i> [_]	<i>song</i>
	<i>xa</i> [^]	<i>broom</i>	<i>aho</i> [_ _]	<i>widow</i>
	<i>xo</i> [_]	<i>house</i>	<i>ahũ</i> [_ /]	<i>dew</i>

Disappearance of Consonants.

The following examples illustrate in modern colloquial Ewe the weakening and dropping of certain consonants and syllables. They are only given to draw attention to this feature, a comprehensive statement is outside the scope of this pamphlet.

¹ There are exceptions, notably *zi* [/], *pipe*, and *ʃ* and *ʒ* are also found in a few words before other vowels; for example, *ʃa*, *to dry* (written *sia*); *ʒo*, *to lean against* (written *zio*).

² Alternatively, it might be considered as an *h* with more than normal friction. There is relatively little scrape, particularly before back vowels.

sika fe dada [-''_-] > sikaada [-''-] *Sika's mother*
 gbe ka gbe [_/_] > gbeagbe [__\] *what date?*
 fifi laa [''_] > fia ['''] *immediately or just now*
 ati la [-'''] > atia ['''] *the tree*
 mele yiyi ge [____'] > meyi ge [__'] *I shall be going*
 ele nu fiam nye hã [-_---] > enu fiamem hã [-_---\]
he is teaching me too

Tone.

Ewe is a tone language, i.e. every syllable in the language has as an integral part of its formation a musical pitch or tone, carried usually by the vowel or a sonant.¹ This pitch is not absolute but relative to the pitch of other syllables in a given utterance. In Ewe it is necessary to distinguish three such levels of tone, viz. a syllable may be said to be of low tone [-] *ko*, *neck*; *ge*, *beard*; of a tone higher than low but lower than that of certain other syllables in the language (i.e. mid tone),² [-] *nu*, *mouth*; *ta*, *head*; or the syllable may be said to have high tone. This feature of tone is most frequently significant and distinguishes meaning as the following pairs of words will show.

		<i>High Tone</i>	<i>Low Tone</i>
★	kpo	<i>oven</i>	<i>walking stick</i>
	to	<i>ear</i>	<i>buffalo</i>
	tɔ	<i>father</i>	<i>river</i>

In addition to level pitches described above, there are found syllables with a pitch movement up or down.

- (i) Rising tone; rises from low to mid or higher, the distinction is unimportant.

★	gbɔ [/_]	<i>goat</i>	avu [/_]	<i>dog</i>
---	----------	-------------	----------	------------

- (ii) Falling tone: is commonly a fall from high to mid,

★	tɛɛ [^\]	<i>aunt</i>	aɖaka [__^\]	<i>box</i>
		dziya [_^\]	<i>rain squall</i>	

¹ In Ewe *m*, *ŋ* are sonants.

ele yiyim [-___-], *he is going* ŋku [-], *eye*

² It is often difficult to distinguish a mid tone from a high or low tone when it occurs on a monosyllable pronounced in isolation; on the other hand it is easily recognisable when it occurs near other tones, more especially when it occurs after a high tone.

occasionally a fall to low:

koklo [-\] *chicken* **feŋle** [_\] *naked*

A few words have a combination tone, e.g.:

★ **drɔ̃** [^], *cupboard*, which is rising-falling.

The tone patterns of words of more than one syllable are made up of combinations of these five tones. Examples of nearly all possible patterns may be readily found. The following illustrate the more common types of two-tone interval found in and between Aɲlɔ words.¹ The tonal patterns of polysyllabic words are based on combinations of these intervals.

A. *Words with syllables of like tone.*

- (i) [^^] High level. The tone of the second syllable is frequently a little lower in pitch than that of the first, but never so as to confuse this interval with high-mid (B (iv)) below.

★ **kutu** *pot* **kuku** *hat*

- (ii) [__] Low level. Again the tone of the second syllable may be somewhat lower than that of the first.

★ **baba** *white ant* **afo** *foot*

- (iii) [--] Mid level.

★ **kusi** *basket* **klenɔ** *coward*

B. *Words with syllables of different tone.*

- (i) [_^] which may be considered low-high or low-mid, the size of interval is not significant, but the first syllable must be completely low (cf. [/] above).

★ **asi** *hand* **ati** *arrow*

- (ii) [-^] Mid-high.²

★ **ala** *raffia* **kese** *monkey*

- (i) and (ii) contrasted:

★ **asi** [_^] **ala** [-^]

¹ The tonal relations between words are similar to those between syllables.

² In actual fact the second tone is considerably lower in pitch than a normal high tone. The interval is diminished: about a musical semi-tone.

- (iii) [ˊ_] High-low or mid-low; again the size of interval is not significant as long as the second is really low (cf. [ˊ\] above).

★ tokpo bucket naked firewood

- (iv) [ˊ-] High-mid.¹ This must be distinguished from high-high (A (i)) and high-low ((iii) below). Cf. [ˊ\] above.

★ legba idol keli light

(iii) and (iv) contrasted:

★ keli [ˊ-] naked [ˊ_]

The importance of tonal accuracy in speaking Ewe has been sufficiently stressed elsewhere. Not only should word and tone be learnt together as vocabulary is acquired, but the student should attempt to master the rules for the many changes of tone that occur when words come together in connected speech. A tonal analysis of Ewe is not possible in this short monograph. All that can be done is to give without comment a few examples of what may be expected.

★ A. tu [ˊ] gun but nye tu [ˊ_] my gun

Kofi [ˊ-], dada [ˊ_] mother

but Kofi dada [ˊ- -] Kofi's mother

★ B. Klu tutu nu [ˊˊ \ -] or [ˊˊ \ ˊ] Klu did the washing

but Klu tutu ko [ˊˊˊ _] Klu washed his neck

Yao dzo [ˊ-] Yao goes

but Klu dzo [ˊ-] Klu goes

★ C. ame [ˊ_] but ame la [ˊ- -] the man

nyi [ˊ_] but nyi la [ˊ- -] the corn

It is useful to classify nouns and verbs according to tonal behaviour; compare, for example:

★ D. meva [ˊ-]	I come	mevi [ˊ_]	I go
(a)ava [ˊ\ -]	it will come	(a)ayi [ˊ_ \]	it will go
va [ˊ/]	come	yi [ˊ_]	go

¹ Series of descending mid tones are common even in short sentences:

e.g. kuteŋa fa [ˊˊˊ - - \] the funeral place is cold

nyɔnuvia yi dua me [ˊˊˊ - - / _] the girl has gone to town

It is perhaps best in the earliest stages to learn words in groups rather than in isolation, as it were. Common greetings and "social formulae" provide excellent material for the beginner. A few such useful sentences are given on Side 1 of Record II¹; they are to be used for practice in hearing and repeating tone groups. They should be thoroughly mastered before going on to the story on Side 2 of the record.

APPENDIX

Text of Gramophone Records

Side 1

- | | |
|------------|---------------|
| 1. vi | 4. ga |
| 2. afi | 5. aka |
| 3. kiniti | 6. papa |
| 7. ame | |
| 8. ati | |
| 9. alē | |
| 10. ka | 11. ke |
| 12. nya | 13. nye |
| 14. gaḍaka | 15. ga ḍeke o |
| 16. mɔ | 19. mo |
| 17. abɔbɔ | 20. ako |
| 18. avɔ | 21. tofo |
| 22. to | 23. tɔ |
| 24. so | 25. sɔ |
| 26. ago | 27. ago |
| 28. fī | 29. alē |
| 30. afā | 31. vɔ̃ |
| 32. gō | 33. lū |
| 34. akpa | 35. akpā |
| 36. lo | 37. lō |
| 38. efii | 39. efii |

¹ See page 22.

- | | | |
|----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 40. mii | | 41. fiī |
| 42. kɔtɛɛ | | 43. sēe |
| 44. baa | | 45. fāa |
| 46. lɔbɔɔ | | 47. vɔɔ |
| 48. lubuu | | 49. fūu |
| 50. tia | | 51. adɔkoe |
| 52. fie | | 53. bua |
| 54. abui | | 55. ao |
| 56. akɔlɔe | | 57. gōe |
| | 58. fie | |
| 59. ede (e)tsɔ | 62. eɖa (a)ʒi | 65. ale ame |
| 60. etsɔ (e)ve | 63. ekɔ (a)ʒɔ | 66. bae (bɛɛ) |
| 61. edo (e)ve | 64. el(e) (a)fi | 67. nae (nɛɛ) |
| | 68. fafɛɛ | |
| 69. yi | | |
| 70. yevu | | |
| 71. aboyome | | |
| 72. wɔ | | |
| 73. ewo | | |
| 74. awu | | |

Side 2

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. pepi | |
| 2. apaka | |
| 3. ati | |
| 4. te | |
| 5. tata | |
| 6. atɔtɔ | |
| 7. to | |
| 8. tu | |
| 9. edii | 10. eɖii |
| 11. ade | 12. aɖe |
| 13. da | 14. ɖa |
| 15. dɔ | 16. ɖɔ |

- | | | |
|---------------|------------|-------------|
| 17. do | | 18. ɔ |
| 19. du | | 20. ɔu |
| 21. drɔ̃ | | 22. drã |
| 23. akpe | | 27. gbe |
| 24. akpakpa | | 28. agba |
| 25. kpɔ | | 29. gbɔ̃ |
| 26. kpo | | 30. agbo |
| 31. tsa | | 35. dza |
| 32. tse | | 36. dze |
| 33. tso | | 37. dzo |
| 34. tsu | | 38. dzu |
| 39. tsi | | 41. dzi |
| 40. tsikpe | | 42. dziehe |
| | 43. tsyɔ | |
| | 44. tsyo | |
| | 45. tsyɔ̃ | |
| 1. nyi | 4. ŋdi | 8. eva etso |
| 2. nye | 5. ŋoti | |
| 3. nya | 6. angba | |
| | 7. taŋ | |
| 9. asi | 11. azi | |
| 10. sisiblisi | 12. ʒitola | |
| 13. yi | 16. xexi | 19. ha |
| 14. ye | 17. xa | 20. aho |
| 15. yaɣla | 18. xo | 21. ahu |
| 22. kpo | 23. kpo | |
| 24. to | 25. to | |
| 26. tɔ | 27. tɔ | |
| 28. kutu | 29. kuku | |
| 30. baba | 31. afo | |
| 32. kusi | 33. klẽno | |
| 34. gbɔ̃ | 35. avu | |

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------|
| 36. tɛɛ | 37. aɖaka |
| 38. dʒiya | |
| 39. drɔ̃ | |
| 40. asi | 41. ati |
| 42. ala | 43. kese |
| 44. asi | 45. ala |
| 46. tɔkpɔ | 47. nake |
| 48. legba | 49. keli |
| 50. keli | 51. nake |
| 52. kutefea fa | |
| 53. nyɔnuvia yi dua me | |
| 54. tu | |
| 55. nye tu | |
| 56. Kofi dada | |
| 57. Klu tutu nu | |
| 58. Klu tutu kɔ | |
| 59. Yao dzo | |
| 60. Klu dzo | |
| 61. meva | |
| 62. meyi | |
| 63. ame la | |

Side 3

1. Kpɛ ɖa dawò ɖɛ? [ˈ_ _ -] Look here, where's your mother?
2. Edo go [ˈ_ /] She has gone out.
3. Ne eva la nabe meva dii [ˈˈ _ - _ - \] When she comes, tell her I have been here.
4. Medzo [-] I am going away.
5. De afeme nyuie [ˈ _ -] Goodbye.
6. Yoo, miagava do go [/ˈ _ -] Right, we shall see each other again.
7. Mede kuku mayi [ˈ _ - -] Please excuse me.
8. Megbona hee [ˈ _ -] Just a minute.
Enyo [-] Right.
9. Nukata nɛdzo ɖo? [ˈ _ - _ \] Why did you go away?
Èdo dɔmedʒui nam [-ˈ _ - \] You annoyed me.
Nenema? Baba nawò [-ˈ \ _ -] Really? I am sorry.
Nyemenya o [ˈ _ -] I didn't realise it.

10. Enyo mesɛɛ [ˈ-__] It's all right.
11. Afika yim nèlɛ? [ˈ-ˈ-__] Where are you going?
Meyina afeme [ˈ-__ˈ-] I am going home.
12. Dɔgbɛ [ˈ-] Good night.
Dɔdɔ nenyɔ [ˈ-ˈ-] Good night.
Ne ke miakpe [ˈ-__] See you to-morrow.
13. Amekae ma? [ˈ-__\] Who's that?
14. Fofɔ wòlɛ [ˈ-ˈ-] It's your father.
15. Nya kae dʒɔ? [ˈ-__] What's the matter?
Menye naneke o [ˈ-ˈ-ˈ-__] It's nothing really.
16. Nuka dim nèlɛ? [ˈ-ˈ-__] What are you looking for?
Nye kuku [ˈ-ˈ-] My hat.
17. Kukua kɛ? [ˈ-ˈ-ˈ-] Which one?
18. Yibɔɔtɔ [ˈ-__\] The black one.
19. Èbɛ alɛkɛ? [ˈ-ˈ-ˈ-] What did you say?
20. Mebe meyi magbɔ [ˈ-ˈ-ˈ-__] I said I was going and would
be back soon.
21. Nàgbɔ kaba [ˈ-/ˈ-ˈ-] Don't be long.
22. De gbɔ [ˈ-__] Don't be long.

Greetings

- I. A. Kekea kea? [ˈ-ˈ-__] How are you?
B. ɛɛ hɛɛ miawo hã miɛfɔa? [ˈ-ˈ-ˈ-ˈ-ˈ-] Very well,
thank you, and you?
A. ɛɛ miɛfɔ [ˈ-ˈ-] Fine, thank you.
B. Yoo [ˈ-/].
- II. A. Dɔdia [ˈ-ˈ-] Good morning (or [ˈ-ˈ-]).
B. Dɔdi hee miɛfɔ nyuiea? [ˈ-ˈ-ˈ-ˈ-ˈ-] Good morning, how
do you do?
A. ɛɛ, miɛfɔ [ˈ-ˈ-ˈ-] Very well, thank you.
B. Yoo [ˈ-/].
- III. A. Dɔdɔ [ˈ-ˈ-] Good afternoon.
B. Dɔdɔ, miɛfɔ sesiea? [ˈ-ˈ-ˈ-ˈ-ˈ-] Good afternoon, how
are you all?
A. ɛɛ, miɛfɔ miawo hã mielia? [ˈ-ˈ-ˈ-ˈ-ˈ-] Very well,
and you?
B. ɛɛ, mieli [ˈ-ˈ-] Very well, thank you.
A. Yoo [ˈ-/].

- IV. A. Fiɛ [-] Good evening.
 B. Fiɛ goo tɔɔ afewòmea dɛ? [-_ _ _ _ - _ _ \] Good evening,
 how's your family?
 A. Edo [-] Quite well.
 B. Ðevawo dɛ? [-_ _ \] The children?
 A. Woli [-] They are well.
 B. Miedo nyuiea? [-_ _ \] Everybody else?
 A. Miedo [-] Quite well.
 B. Yoo [/].
 A. Togbinyea dɛ? [-_ _ -] How's the old man?
 B. Edo [-] Quite well.
 A. Vinyeawo ken? [-_ - _ _] All the children?
 B. Woli [-] Quite well.
 A. Adzo dɛ? [-_ _] And Adzo?
 B. Ebia wò [-_] She sends her regards.
 A. Miedo na ma? [-_ _ _] Everybody else?
 B. Miedo [-] Quite well.
 A. Yoo' [/].

Very Short Informal Welcome Greetings

- A. Tsoo! wòɛzɔ [- \ / _] Hallo, welcome!
 B. Yoo [/].
 A. Mielia? [-_] How are you?
 B. Ee, mieli [-_ _] Very well.
 A. D3ā, d3ā, d3ā! [^ ^ ^ ^] Welcome.
 B. D3ā goo, d3ā goo [^ ^ _ ^ ^] Thank you.
 A. Yɛyɛyɛ [- _ _ _] Welcome.
 B. Gbɔgbɔgbɔ [- _ _ _] Thank you.

Story

Side 4

Yiyi kple Kadzidɔe

<hr/> - - - - / - -	
Mise gli loo!	Gli neva!
Listen to a story!	Out with it!

Gbe ɖeka do sesēa ɖe to hee, eye lāwo katā kaka heno
Once upon a time there was a great famine and all the animals

nuɖuɖu dim. Yiyi hā nɔ tsatsam zuu keke va ke ɖe
went off in search of food. The spider too was wandering around

kpea ɖe si to ŋku eve la ŋu. Ɖeɖi te egu ale gbegbe
till he came to a stone that had two eyes. He was extremely tired,

bena ɖeko wòtsyɔ ɖe atia ɖe si te ɖe kpea ŋu la te.
so very tired in fact that he simply collapsed under a tree near

Sēe kasia gbemelā eve va le yiyim eye esi woke ɖe
the stone. A little while later, two animals came passing by, and

kpea ŋu la, ɖeka gblo be, "Oo, menye kpee nye esia?"
when they reached the stone one of them remarked: "Oh! isn't

Evelia gblo bena, "Tsoo eto ŋku!"
that a stone?" The second one said, "Dear me, with eyes too!"

Wo ame evea katā do ɣli zi ɖeka bena, "Kpe to ŋku!" Enumake
And both cried out together, "A stone with eyes!" Immediately

wodze anyi gbloo heku. Yiyi kpɔ nusiawo katā eye wòhe lāwo
they fell down dead. The spider saw all this, and quietly took

yi afeɛme hetsɔ kpe la yi da ɖe mɔ dze evea ɖe nu hele egbo.
the dead animals home. He then carried the stone to a cross-road

Ne lāwo va yina ko la Yiyi nafu du ayi tso
and kept watch. Each time an animal came by, the spider would

wo abia wo be: "Nukae ma le mō ta?"
run up to it and innocently ask: "What's that by the roadside, do

eye ne lāwo gblō be: "Tsoo kpe to nkue,"
you know?" and it would answer, "Goodness, it's a stone with

ko la wotsyo na kploo de Yiyi fe afō nu eye wōhea wo
eyes," and drop down dead at the spider's feet. He would then

sesese yia afeme dāna wo kple. Funo
drag it home and cook the meat for his wife and children. As a

kple viawo duna, alebe woawo da ami alesi dze le esime lā
result, they were well fed and healthy, whilst all other animals

gedewo di ku de fu gu.
went without food, and were exceedingly hungry and thin.

Kadzidoe be de ati me kpo Yiyi fe wonawo kenj.
The squirrel hid in a tree and saw everything the spider did.

Edi va anyi eye kasia Yiyi kpoe la efu du va yi tui hebia nya
He came down, and immediately the spider caught sight of him,

xoxo lae. Ebiae be: "Nukae
he ran up to him with the old question. He asked: "What's

ma?" Kadzidɔe be: "Nukae ma?" Yiyi gblo be:
that?" The squirrel said: "What's that?" The spider said:

"Mebe nukae mahā?" Kadzidɔe be: "Mebe nukae mahā?"
"I say, what is that?" The squirrel said: "I say, what is that?"

Yiyi be: "Menye kpea?" Kadzidɔe hā gblo be:
The spider said: "Isn't it a stone?" The squirrel also said:

"Menye kpea?" Yiyi be: "Kpe nuka?"
"Isn't it a stone?" The spider said: "What stone?" The

Kadzidɔe hā be: "Kpe nuka?" Yiyi be: "Kpe to
squirrel said: "What stone?" The spider said: "A stone

la . . ." Kadzidɔe hā be: "Kpe to la . . ."
with . . ." The squirrel repeated: "A stone with . . ." The

Yiyi be: "Yi edzie." Kadzidɔe hā be, "Yi edzie." Dzi ku
spider said: "Go on!" The squirrel said, "Go on!" The spider

Yiyi eye wògblo be: "Kadzidɔe dzo movi loo,
became impatient and losing his temper said: "Oh, squirrel, how

kpe to ŋku ya ko nāgbloa?" Yiyi mewu nya nu o. Esime wòbe
dreadfully stupid you are: just a simple thing like 'A stone with

"Kpe to ŋku" ko la ye guto hā deko wòmu dze anyi hedze tsi
eyes' you could have said." He never finished the sentence for,

- - -
dʒakaa.

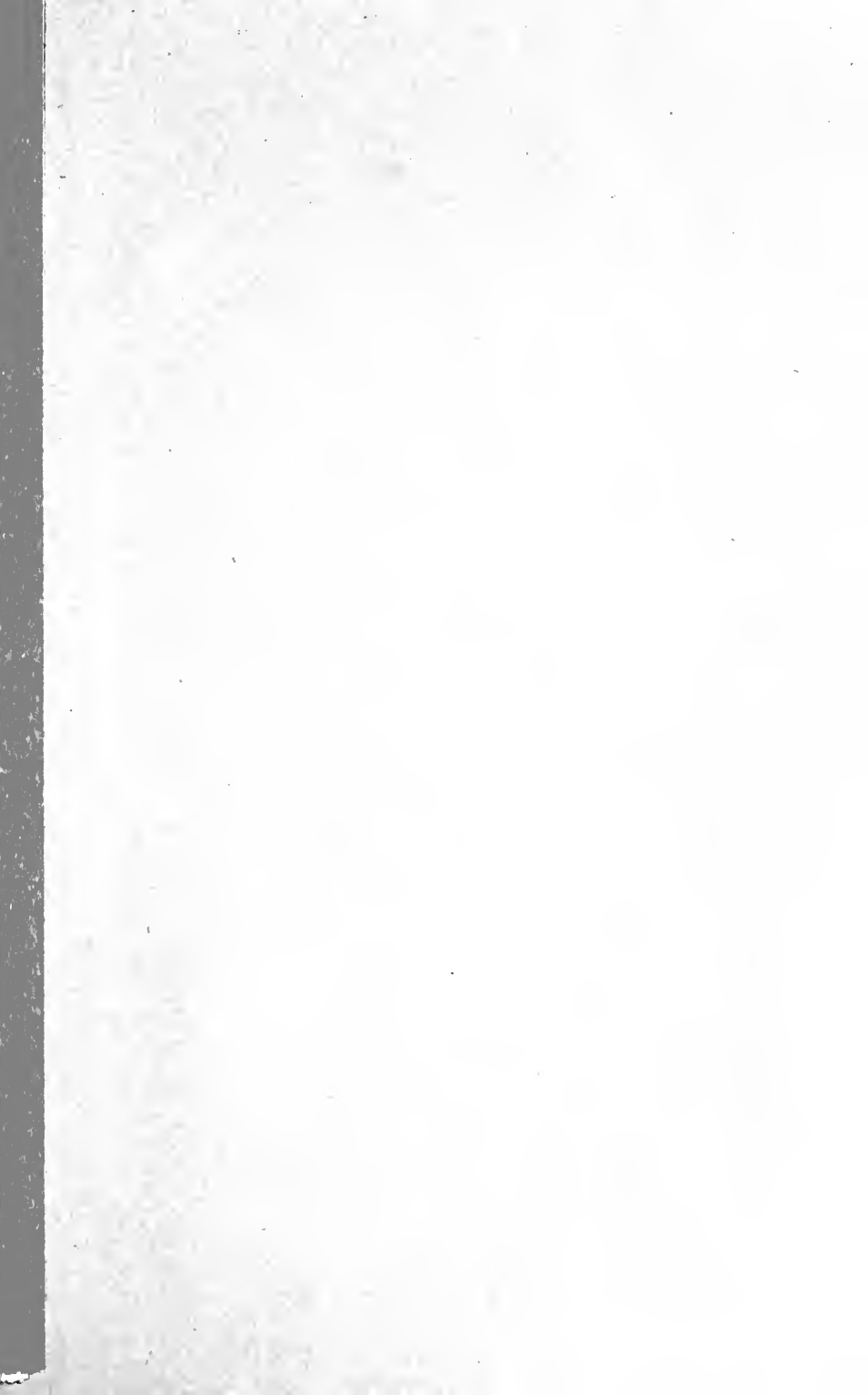
as soon as he said "a stone with eyes," he himself fell down stone

- - - - - \ \ - - - - -
Ba na ame wobana na loo. Yee metsɔ do ɖe afim nyagāa
dead. And so it is that you'll be done by as you did, and it's

- - - - - \ - - - - -
ɖe aboɖa dʒram tsɔ blem nye hã metsɔ ble mi loo.
with this story that the old woman selling boiled corn over there

/ - - \ -
Yoo dʒe numee wò.
amused me and I pass it on to you. Thank you for a very witty

/ - - - -
Yoo dʒe se to gobuie mi.
story. Thank you for listening.





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Berry, Jack
The pronunciation of
Ewe

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